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The adolescent religious identity development in the transition period: do parents still matter?

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Abstract

Adolescence often known as a transition period from childhood to adulthood. In this phase, adolescents may experience many changes in their identity toward multiple life domains, including religious domain. There have been extensive studies on religious identity in late adolescence, yet only few have discussed the role of significant persons to develop religious identity. This study aimed to investigate the role of parent-adolescent interactional styles to religious identity status in late adolescence. There were 134 undergraduate students of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta participated in this study. Data were collected using the Religious Identity Status Scale and Parenting Style Scale and analyzed through descriptive statistic, Pearson's correlation, chip-square, and Contingency Coefficient test. Descriptive analysis showed that all participants have been enabling parent-adolescent interactional style, and 22% participants have achievement religious identity status while 78% others were in searching moratorium status. Contingency Coefficient analysis indicated an adequate strong relationship between parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent religious identity status.

Keywords: Religious identity status, parent-adolescent interaction, late adolescence.

Introduction

Adolescents aged 17 to 19 years in Indonesia generally encounter a new transition period in their lives. They will devolve from high school education level to university level. This transition lead to some inevitable impacts for them, both positive and negative. On one side, they—esspecially those in late adolescence period—will experience a rapid physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. Thus, they will able to filter and synthesize their self-image during childhood to reach maturity in adulthood (Santrock, 2014). In addition, the university environment stimulates adolescent's thinking skill and broader new experience which will enable them to achieve a higher level of integration between diverse dimensions of identity (Santrock, 2014).

However, scholars also have been noted a number of negative impacts in adolescent's transition process from high school to university. Kroger's research about late adolescence students demonstrates three important findings: (1) their fears of various responsibilities that must be faced in adulthood; (2) doubts about the ability to overcome that responsibilities, and (3) hopes to find a more meaningful life, yet accompanied by fear of failure. In line with the results of the previous study (J. Kroger, 2007), Howard & Galambos also found a confusion experienced by late adolescents within the domains of work, education, college, partners, and cultural differences when they proceed from high school to university (Brown & Prinstein, 2011). Erikson termed those confusions as identity crisis. At this stage adolescents have to encounter many roles and meet various problems about who they are, what is important to them, and what is their life's objective (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents who are able to exceed these conflicting roles and identities will have a new and acceptable awareness about themselves. Conversely, those who are failed will experience identity confusion (Santrock, 2014).

Marcia further elaborated Erikson's identity theory and described four clearly differentiated identity statuses, based on the amount of exploration and commitment that adolescents experience or have experienced (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 2012). Exploration refers to the active questioning and weighing of various identity alternatives before making decisions about the values, beliefs and goals to pursue. Commitment involves making a relatively firm choice about an identity domain and engaging in significant activities geared toward the implementation of that choice. The four identity statuses are achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion. In 2008 Crocetti et al. developed Marcia's identity status from two-dimensional into three-dimensional model which consist of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. The three-dimensional model results to five, rather than four identity status. The achievement status would be characterized by high commitment, high in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment. The foreclosure status would be characterized by high commitment, low to moderate in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment. The moratorium status would be characterized by low commitment, low in-depth exploration, and high reconsideration of commitment. The diffusion status would be characterized by low commitment, low in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment. Finally, the fifth new status, searching moratorium, would be characterized by high commitment and high in-depth exploration (as for the achievement status) but also high reconsideration of commitment (as for the moratorium status) (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008).

Prior studies have been established the association between identity status and psychological well-being in late adolescence. Adolescents who have mature identities (i.e. the achievement status) demonstrate high scores in various aspects of psychological functions, such as self-esteem, internal locus of control, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, self-adjustment and realisation; positive personality profile; and increased self-awareness and emotion stability. Conversely, adolescents with diffusion identity status score lower on self-esteem, internal self-control, and psychological well being and demonstrate a high tendency to engage in antisocial behavior and health-related risky behaviors such as drug abuse (Meeus, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2011). The identity status of adolescents in a domain may differ to any other domains (Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, & Kokko, 2005; Goossens, 2001). An adolescent could have achieved identity status on a single domain, but diffused on other domains. There are at least eight identity status domains that commonly studied by recent scholars. According to Marcia, one of the strategies to choose a domain is by assessing the domain that considered being important in a certain period (Marcia et al., 2012).

Religious is an ideological domain that considered to be important in adolescence. An individual may be examining self-definition attributes in domains such as vocational choice, ideology, sexuality, family roles, and/or sex-role preference during this period (Matteson, 1993). In addition, a thorough understanding of adolescents religious experience is important given the substantial identity development that occurs during this period (Fowler & Dell, 2006). Particularly in Indonesia, religious domain has a central role in citizen's life since the first pillar of Indonesia national principles (*Pancasila*) is Belief in the One and Only God (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*).

Cohen-Malayev et al. refer the term of religious identity to an individual's religious self-definition and to the significance ascribed to religion in one's self-definition (Cohen-Malayev, Schachter, & Rich, 2014). Another scholars, Grifftih & Griggs specifically defined religious identity status as a conceptual framework defined by exploration and commitment within the specific domain of religion (Griffith & Griggs, 2001). Religious identity as well has been proved to relates positively to psychological well-being parameters (Ahrens, Abeling, Ahmad, & Hinman, 2010; Chan, Tsai, & Fuligni, 2015; Green & Elliott, 2010; Ivtzan, Chan, Gardner, & Prashar, 2013; Unterrainer, Lewis, & Fink, 2014; Van Cappellen, Toth-Gauthier, Saroglou, & Fredrickson, 2016), self-esteem, positive affect, and meaningfulness (Chan et al., 2015; Davis III & Kiang, 2016). Those prior studies affirm the importance of religious domain for adolescent identity development since they experience a process of restructuring social relations and determine important choices for their lives in the future (Beyers & Goossens, 2008).

However, adolescents are not alone when developing their identities. Schwartz et al. argue that identity status development of adolescents are influenced by social environment (Schwartz et al., 2011). This findings are in line with Erickson's opinion that the adolescent identity development is a psychosocial process because individuals build their identity within rich social context (Bartoszuk & Pittman, 2010). Thus, the conceptualization of identity formation must be seen as a process of interactions or transactions between individuals and their context (Koepke & Denissen, 2012); Parents are one of the most crucial elements of adolescents social context. Because parents have been became an important source of

socialization for individual development, even in late adolescence period (Beyers & Goossens, 2008). Their study also demonstrates the relationship between parenting style and healthy identity development in late adolescence. Another findings have been shown the important role of parents for adolescent identity development as well. Lopez et al. demonstrate that changes in identity status are related to changes in ethnic and family identity (Lopez, Huynh, & Fuligni, 2011). In addition, Hausers et al. have found a relationship between style of interaction in the family and the development of adolescent ego (Hauser et al., 1984). There are two styles of interaction in the family, namely enabling and constraining. Adolescent ego development is facilitated through the enabling interactions during problem solving process within the family. Conversely, constraining interactions will inhibit adolescent ego development.

Research examining the relationship between identity status variables and parent/ family variables have been widely discussed (Jane Kroger & Marcia, 2011; Jane Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Meeus, 2011; Meeus, Van De Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2011; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). However, no specific study has examined the relationship of these two variables in religious domain. This study aims to investigate the relationship between parent-adolescent interaction and religious identity status in late adolescence.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study are 134 college students in Sleman, Yogyakarta. They are recruited through random sampling technique. The age range of the participant is 17-21 years (M = 18.73, SD = .97).

Measures

The Religious Identity Status Scale (RISS) was used to assess commitment, in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment in religious domain. This scale consists of 38 items (α =.908). The favorable items are responded to a 4-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) and conversely for the unfavorable items. Sample items are: "I try to worship everyday" (commitment; 21 items), "I try to understand the teachings of the religion that I believe" (in-depth exploration; 11 items), "I have curiosity about the teachings of other religions, even though I am sure of the teachings of my religion as well" (reconsideration of commitment; 6 items).

To measure parent-adolescent interaction style, we employed The Parenting Styles Scale (Suwarjo, 2000) which consist of 44 items (α=.791). Each item of PSS is responded to based on how often the research participant accepts a particular style of interaction from his/her parents. There are five point scale of answers for favorable items ranging from never (scored 1) to always (scored 5) and conversely for the unfavorable items.

Data Analysis

There are three main processes of the data analysis. First, descriptive statistic analysis is employed to determine the religious identity status and parenting style of each participant. The participant's total score of each subscale of RISS will be categorized as high or low by using the median-split method (Marcia et al., 2012).

Table 1. Categorization of Participant's RISS Scores

Subscale	Level	Score
Commitment (Co)	High	53-105
	Low	21-52
In-depth Exploration (IE)	High	28-55
	Low	11-27
Reconsideration of Commitment (RC)	High	16-30
	Low	6-15

Based on score's level above, the participant will be classified into one of five identity statuses (achievement, searching moratorium, moratorium, foreclosure, or diffusion) based on criteria in table 2.

Table 2 Religious Identity Status Classification

Status	Score Level
Achievement	High Co, high IE, low RC
Searching Moratorium	High Co, high IE, high RC
Moratorium	Low Co, high IE, high RC
Foreclosure	High Co, low IE, low RC
Diffusion	Low Co, low IE, low RC

Source: Crocetti, et al. (2008).

On the other hand, to categorize the parent-adolescent interactional style, we sumed up the total score of PSS. Participant whose score is above 132 will be classified as having an enabling interaction whereas participant whose score is 132 or under will be classified as having a constraining interaction.

Second, a correlation test is conducted to determine the relationship of parent-adolescent interactional style and commitment, *in-depth exploration,* and *reconsideration of commitment* in religious domain. And finally, a chi square test is used to find out the relationship of parent-adolescent interactional style and religious identity status.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistical analysis of the Parenting Style Scale showed that 134 subjects (98%) have enabling interaction style, while only three subjects (2%) have constraining interaction style in Figure 1.
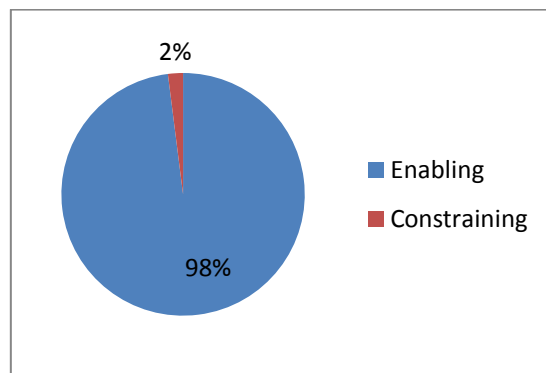

Figure 1. Profile of Parent-Adolescent Interactional Style

The religious identity status of the research subjects was classified into three categories; achievement (75%), searching moratorium (20%), and foreclosure (5%) as described on figure 2.

The Pearson correlation test indicates a strong positive relationship between parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent commitment and in-depth exploration activities in religious domain. The relationship is indicated by the Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.462 and 0.394 with p = 0.000. This means that the more enabling the interaction style, the higher the adolescent commitment and in-depth exploration activities in religious domain. Conversely, the more it inclines to be constraining interaction style, the more it will lead to low commitment and in-depth exploration activities from its religious identity.

Base of the figure 2, the finding are in line with several other research findings which showed that positive adolescent and parent relationship encourages the development of identity (Chaplin & John, 2010; Umana-Taylor & Guimond, 2010) and the formation of commitment to identity (Klimstra, Hale III, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010; Klimstra, Luyckx, et al., 2010; Meeus et al., 2010) In this study, positive relationship between adolescents and parents were represented by enabling interaction style. According to Suwarjo parents with enabling interaction style will respect adolescents' decision (Suwarjo, 2000). Objective assessment, support, and appreciation from parents to adolescents will make them being respected of their choices and decisions, as well as being responsible for the consequences of the decisions that they have made. Beyers & Goossens also found that parenting is a predictor for the exploratory phase (covering extensive exploration activities and making commitments) on identity formation, while the evaluative phase (covering exploration activities in depth and identifying commitments) predicts more supportive parenting (Beyers & Goossens, 2008).
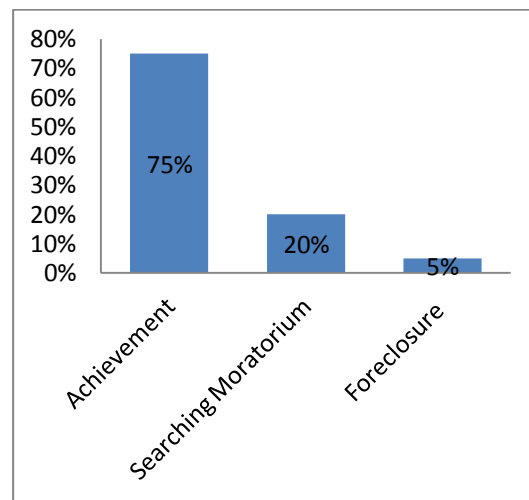
Figure 2. The Religious Identity Status Profile

Findings of this study also indicated that adolescents who have enabling interaction style have a higher degree of in-depth exploration activity than their constraining friends. This is because parents who have an enabling interaction style are performing an open interaction with their adolescent kids. Later, this open interaction will foster a higher degree of in-depth exploration acitivities in adolescents. According to Suwarjo, "the open-interaction parents" will not prohibit opinion differences, respect differences that arise between family members, and facilitate adolescents to be "who they are" while at the same time still maintain emotional ties among family members (Suwarjo, 2000).

Our findings also supported the results of previous research by Hausers et al. who found that enabling interaction style encourages family members to express their own thoughts and perceptions (Hauser et al., 1984). Conversely, constraining interaction style interferes individual development towards autonomy and differentiation. In addition, Papini argued that exploration of identity is facilitated by an emotionally close or unified family context and flexible adjustment characterized by open patterns of interpersonal communication (Archer, 1994).

However, the relationship between parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent reconsideration of commitment activity shows a very weak relationship (r=0.018) or almost zero. These is due to the facts that adolescents who have enabling interaction style are distributed not only in high level of reconsideration of commitment (represented by the searching moratorium status), but also in low level (represented by the achievement and foreclosure status).

The term reconsideration of commitment itself is defined as an adolescent effort to relinquish his present commitment that are no longer satisfactory and searching for new ones (Crocetti et al., 2008). Within the religious domain, this aspect indicated a decrease of satisfaction. Adolescents in a high reconsideration of commitment (represented by the searching moratorium status) will then deepen and broaden their exploration efforts to reach a more satisfying appreciation of their current religious activities. Therefore, those in achievement and foreclosure status will have low reconsideration of commitment since they have been satisfied with their current religious activities.

Moreover, a chi-square test is performed to find out the relationship between the parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent religious identity status in a whole. We first performed the crosstab analysis. By reviewing Figure 3, we can conclude that most of the achieved adolescents have an enabling interaction style, while only one achieved adolescent owns a constraining interaction style. In addition, no one with searching moratorium religious identity status has a constraining interaction style, whereas the foreclosed adolescents are distributed almost equivalently in enabling and constraining interactional styles.
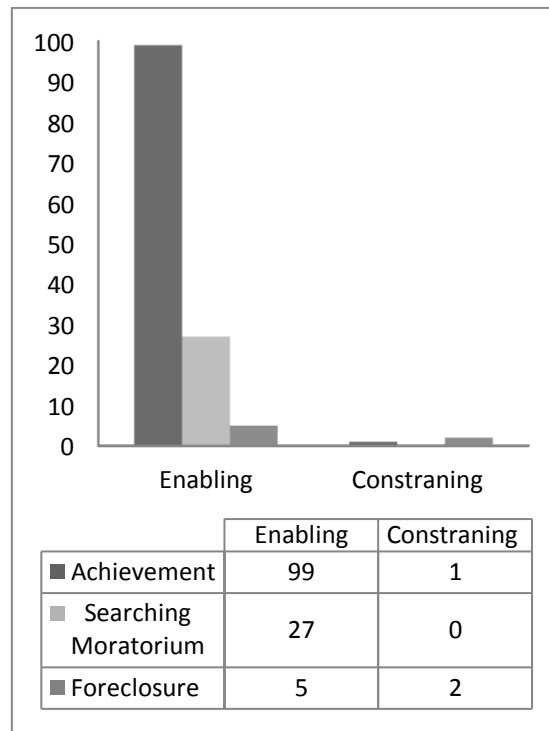
	Enabling	Constraning
■ Achievement	99	1
▢ Searching Moratorium	27	0
■ Foreclosure	5	2

Figure 3. Crosstab Analysis of Parent-Adolescent Interactional Style and Religious Identity Status

The results of the chi-square test indicates a chi-square value of 0.000 or smaller than 0.05, which means that there is a relationship between parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent religious identity status. Furthermore, the Contingency Coefficient test has a value of 0.386 (p=0.000) which indicates that parent-adolescent interactional style contributes adequately to the development of adolescent religious identity status. The more enabling the parent-adolescent interactional style, the better the status of adolescent religious identity.

However, this study highlights an anomalous condition found in adolescent who had the constraining interaction style, yet classified in achievement religious identity status. According to Hausers, et al. (1984) the constraining interaction style could inhibit adolescents ego development and will interfere their autonomy and differentiation processes. Thus, adolescent with constraining interaction style should not have reached the most adaptive religious identity status (achievement). It is probably because he has another significant others out of his parents who influenced much his religious identity development. Some significant others might be sourced from friendship, neighborhood, or educational environment. These types of significant other termed by Brofenbrenner as a microsystem layer (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

A number of researchers, such as King and Roeser, recognizes the formative influence of parents, friends, and mentors (teachers or lecturers) to the development of adolescent religiosity (King & Roeser, 2009). A study by Adams and Fitch had long been proven the role of educational environment for adolescents identity development (Adams, 1985; Nooroney, Jaafar, Hassan, & Noah, 2019). They argued that an educational environment encouraging a broad, analytical, and critical insights into social problems will facilitate the identity development. Particularly in religious domain, Cohen-Malayev, Schachter, & Rich also found that teachers who are able to be meaningful models for their students and provide valuable religious studies could encourage the development of religious identity (Cohen-Malayev et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This study confirms a significant relationship between parent-adolescent interactional style and adolescent religious identity status. This finding supports the results of the previous studies that a positive relationship between adolescents and parents will foster the formation of adolescent commitment and the development of adolescent religious identity. However, our study also found an interesting finding in

which adolescent with constraining interaction style has reached the achievement religious identity status. Further research in qualitative approach is needed to discover the role of significant person other than parents to adolescent religious identity development.

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